241 782 brothers of the family heads who died childless (zig'tinguin damba), and to the ancestors and grandparents. May they see to it that these offerings are accepted by the kinkirsi (spirits of the fields) and that the latter favor X with [242] good health and large crops of millet and beans."

[787] Once these sacrifices have been made -- if they are accepted, the rooster falls on its back -- the new owner has his land cleared and awaits the winter season.

Field work. As soon as the first rains have come, the owner goes once more to the field and has another rooster killed and offered to the kinkirga [singular of kinkirsi] with a plea for gnimassem (good health) and large harvests which he will consume with new wives and new children (pog'palla, la bipalla). Afterward he sows large and small millet, peanuts, beans, etc.

If the year has been a good one and the Moaga has had fine crops, he is happy and in good time will remember the spirit of the fields. For the moment he is busy transporting the millet to the temporary granary (lourgho).

Threshing millet. Before his millet is threshed, the Moaga must make a sacrifice to the zéiga (threshing floor). The ritual words differ from those described above only in the following words: "X asks that this millet, which he will eat, be good for him and that he eat it in peace and good health with his family." (Kita ri ki wan ne lafi layelsomdé né a zak'ramba.)

241 476 [252] [243] He then appeals to the young men of the village for help in threshing his grain. For the occasion he has a great deal of beer prepared and quantities of beans (benga) cooked. The beans are prepared with sesame (sinni). After the job is done, two children between the ages of six and seven are called, and their hands filled with the bean mixture. They must run around the threshing floor while eating some of the beans. The rest will be scattered to the winds. They must stop three times for breath and look at each other. Then the remaining beans are distributed among the workers. They are also given beer.

423 Do owners retain rights over abandoned land? In order to occupy abandoned land; permission must first be obtained from the former owner, who retains his rights over the land. He may reclaim it at

423 will, and the new occupant cannot make the slightest protest.

It should be pointed out, however, that since land is most often abandoned because it was thought to be unproductive or haunted, there is rarely a claim to it by a former owner. In any event the matter is settled by the interested parties. The local administration and the canton chief rarely intervene in such cases.

Owners' rights over fruit trees in cultivated fields. Donsé or néré [locust bean] trees whose fruits contain a yellowish, sweet powder that is edible and [244] whose seeds are used to make soumbala, a fetid condiment much prized by the natives, remain the exclusive property of the former occupant. On the other hand, the tamsé (karite tree) belong to the new owner.

This is because the karite tree is found almost everywhere in the bush, while the néré is less common.

Rights of the chiefs over cultivated land. As a general rule, since the principle of right by possession is honored among the Mossi, a canton chief will not confiscate without reason cultivated land belonging to one of his subjects if the land has always been occupied by the occupant's grandparents.

When the land is unoccupied, however, or newly occupied, the canton chief may, by virtue of his absolute authority over his territory, take possession, and the new owner may not claim any compensation.

Field Work

In principle, a family field is held in common. When a woman grows old, however, she no longer does field work with her husband. She has her own field and feeds herself as best she may, since her husband pays no further attention to her and no longer supports her. The work is done by the family as a group, and the size of the field varies with the size of the family.

Early in the morning, usually before [245] sunrise, the head of the family wakens the young people. They go out to the field, which may be five to ten kilometers away. Around ten o'clock, the women bring the remains of last night's sagbo or, lacking that, some millet flour which is taken in water.

226 most difficult to ford. Each watercourse, or more exactly each pond,
[423 belongs to a naba and bears a special name, so no river has the same name
552] name all along its course. During the dry season the lelek /bed?/ of the watercourses is usually dry. Here and there are to be found ponds of varying depth where the cattle is watered. These ponds are where the natives fish. They wait until the water level subsides to knee height, for otherwise fishing would be too difficult.

226 The fishing gear is as crude as the hunting gear. There is a small
227 net held open by three sticks forming a triangle and crossed by a tough stick that is held in the hand, quite similar to the spoon-nets we use to gather shrimp. Above all a sort of wicker trap is used, conical in shape, open at the base and closed at the tip with a movable lid. This trap sometimes contains a second one made of very flexible sticks that are attached to the base of the first one. The two traps thus have a common base, but the second one opens within the first. The fish enters the trap and is held by the sticks of the smaller cone, which close in as the fish tries to get out. The fisherman removes the trap from the water or leaves it sunk in the mud, opens the lid, plunges in his hand and removes the fish, which is confined and easy to seize. The fisherman then puts it in a net or in a leather bag.

226 On a set date the owner of the pond offers sacrifices to the crocodiles
825 so they will not bite anybody. This is why the naba of Koupéla, before he fishes in his pond, must sacrifice a black goat and a chicken. No one may kill a crocodile while fishing, or the naba will die before the year is over. Was not a crocodile killed in his father's pond on
[789] the very year when he died? Before they go fishing, the natives make charms by burning roots and tree bark inside their traps. If the charm is good, the fish will rush headlong into the net or trap.

226 The fishermen gather at one end of the pond. They stand in a row across the water and move slowly forward while dipping their nets and traps over and over again. All the fish caught are put in bags or tossed to friends who stand on the shore, but, as during the hunt, the naba takes an ample share and seizes the finest specimens. The ponds hold mostly silurids anyway, which like mud and retain its odor and taste even when cooked. The Volta rivers, on the other hand, contain more abundant and more varied fish. /52/ When the natives have crossed and recrossed the pond several times, only small fry remain, and everyone goes home glad to have a little fish for the sauce and especially to have escaped the teeth of the crocodiles, for in spite of

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belonging to him, he can be relied upon to share with the members of the lineage if this should be necessary.

Capital goods in the form of houses, granaries, and fields are the property of the lineage. Individual rights are limited to temporary use and custodianship but are passed on to others when a general shift in residence and role follows the death of a senior member of the lineage. Although property is passed on in accordance with the rules of descent in the lineage, part of the property redistributed represents the product of the labor of the lineage as a consanguineal kin group. For, as has been indicated, the labor of the wives, who are not lineage members, is as important as that of their husbands and children.

The lineage head discusses the coming year with the other elders, and an over-all production plan is made out. They decide what fields are to be left fallow, what ones are to be planted to cotton and the varieties of millet, what lands may be used by individuals desiring to plant a cash crop, and what, if any, land may be loaned to neighboring lineages or to in-laws. With the approach of the first rains, all economically active men and women go to their fields to prepare them for planting, leaving behind in the village only the old people and the children who are still too small to assist in the fields or tend their fathers' animals.

A considerable portion of the land within the limits of a Mossi village is under the direct control of the village chief (*Tenga Naba*) and the earth custodian (*Tenga Soba*), the local representatives of political and supernatural authority. This land is used for the public way, for the market place, and for burial grounds and latrines. Except for that which is too poor for any purpose, all available land within several miles of a village is put under cultivation.

Ki is the generic name which the Mossi give to the millet, which is the basic product in their economy and which receives the largest single allocation of land and labor of any Mossi economic activity. Two kinds of millet are planted, a large-grained variety (*kenda*) and a small-grained variety (*kazua*). Millet is the first crop to be planted after the rains have begun. Small- and large-grained millet seeds are frequently mixed and sown in the same field. Small-grained millet may also be sown in the same field with a white bean (*benga*). A "tired" field may be left fallow for five, ten, or fifteen years. When it is first replanted, it will be seeded to millet for the first three years. The fourth year it may again be put into millet, but if the previous crop was not good, cotton will be planted. Usually, a Mossi farmer plants cotton for two years, millet for three, then groundnuts, more cotton, then two more years of millet. It is believed that cotton renews the soil because of the intensive cultivation required: the earth is brought up into hillocks and turned over; after picking, the plant may be turned under and left to enrich the soil.

243 tree set to fire. It burns slowly, and only a slight effort is needed to cut it or topple it down.

[423] When plots are being cleared, useful trees such as karité /shea butter/ or néré /locust bean/ are spared. They remain in the field and revert to the man who is doing the clearing, the owner of the plot.

One awaits the rains before sowing but one does not sow when the first rains fall in April. It is only in May, when the rains are frequent and the storms heavy, that the sowing is done.

A previously cultivated field is merely cleaned before sowing. While only men, as we have already seen, may clear a new plot, Mossi women as well as men share in the cleaning of a field that was cultivated on preceding years, and in the sowing as well.

The sowing is done as follows: The koutiaga (a kind of daba) is held in the left hand, while a small gourd containing millet is held in the right hand. The man or woman, squatting, makes a hole with the koutiaga with the left hand, and drops the millet into the hole with the right hand. Then some earth is replaced with the left hand.

Now the millet is allowed to grow. When it has emerged from the ground and shot about 20 centimeters, people go with the ouaka (another kind of daba) to remove the weeds growing among the millet shoots. In some areas everyone cleans up, men, women, and children. In other areas, as a rule, it is the men who carry out this task, /468/ but when they are too few the women help out. The weeding is done every morning.

Among the Mossi fields are cleaned three times between sowing and harvesting. We have already seen that the Gourounsi only do this twice.

When the millet has grown tall and the birds might peck at it, the women and children are sent to the fields to frighten the birds away.

243 343 The small millet is harvested around mid-November. When it is ripe, the stalks, 2 or 3 meters high, are cut down. They are laid upon the ground, and the heads are cut with a knife. The heads might be likened to the tip of those water reeds which bear a kind of brown velvety stem, some 30 centimeters long, rounded and about the thickness of two fingers. Once the heads have been cut off, they

222 predominates in the bush of the territory and which, owing to its
137 abundance, lends the bush its particular character.

The karité fruit is an egg-shaped, elongated chestnut, smaller than the fruit of the European chestnut tree. It is distinguished from it even more clearly by its fleshy covering with its greenish skin. This flesh is soft, quite thick, and tastes delicious, like a very ripe, even overripe pear.

222 It is the women who gather the karité when the fruit is ripe,
252 before the rainy season, at the beginning of April. First, the flesh surrounding the chestnut is eaten /496/. Then, after breaking the brown shell, the inner part is used to make the famous karité butter.

252 As everywhere else, it is the women who do this among the Mossi. They remove the shell of the chestnut, and then mash the sticky and whitish substance which is found inside. It is pounded on crushing stones with a little wooden pestle. Once this is done, the substance is cooked in a canari and then mashed again, this time in the large wooden mortars, until the paste acquires the consistency of butter. Then it is pounded once more between crushing stones. When this is over, the paste is placed in a canari with lukewarm water, and then stirred and manipulated by hand. This produces a sort of dirty-white cream, somewhat similar to beaten egg whites, but firmer. Then this cream is boiled until it changes into oil. The impurities drop to the bottom of the canari, and the oil floats. The latter is gathered, placed in a clean gourd, and allowed to cool. The result is a pale yellow butter. At first sight it looks like real butter, but when sniffed it reveals a characteristic odor which is unpleasant to Europeans.

Gourounsi women prepare karité butter in the same manner as Mossi women.

302 This butter is put to various uses. First of all, it is utilized for grooming purposes. The women especially rub it into their hair in copious quantities, not only among the Mossi but throughout the Sudan as well. This, naturally enough, lends them an aroma which
[388] is not very pleasant to European noses. Karité butter is also made into soap when certain ashes are added. Finally, it is used in cooking.

423 The karité trees standing in a field belong to the owner of the field. Those which stand in the bush belong to the people of the

423 village in whose territory the bush is located. They belong to all the people of the village, for Mossi chiefs have not set those trees aside for themselves as they did with the néré trees.

222 137 The néré are found in large numbers in Mossi territory, although they are far less numerous than the karité, which literally fill the bush. The ratio must be something like one /497/ néré for every fifteen karité. The néré is nevertheless far from rare, and sometimes ten or fifteen are to be found together, standing not far apart. The néré is easily distinguished by its branches which expand in a fanlike arrangement from a short but elegant trunk. The branches spread out very prettily, in triangular fashion, so the néré blossoms out like a shower of fireworks. Its leaves are no less characteristic than its shape. They are of a dark, oxydized green which contrasts with the superb brilliant green of the karité. The néré leaves are similar to those of the acacia.

The néré is called roga or goaga, doga or doaga in Mossi. It is called soungou in Nounouma and Kassouna, sôla in Sissala. The Nankana call it roga or doga like the Mossi.

The fruits of the néré are long brown pods that grow in clusters on the tree and that contain a yellow substance, sweet to the taste, packed around a sort of very elongated pit. The women gather these 222 423 fruits approximately from March 15 to April 15. The neré trees standing in a field belong to the owner of the field, but the Mossi village chiefs claim ownership to those that stand in the uncultivated bush.

Among the Gourounsi, as we know, the néré that stand in a field, even if the latter is not being cultivated at the moment, belong to the owner of the field, while those that stand in the uncultivated bush surrounding the village belong to all the people of the village.

This points up the difference between a centralized kingdom where the authority of the chiefs is strong, and small independent cantons or villages where it is not.

252 261 Néré is put to many uses. First of all, the yellow meal, including the more solid central part that runs from one end of the pod to the other like a pit, is mashed by the women in millet mortars or in wooden gourds. Once mashed, it is thinned with

326 First, there is that of the blacksmith (saba or sahaba in the local tongue). Two kinds of blacksmiths may be distinguished among the Mossi. First, the blacksmiths who are gathered into separate villages or in large special quarters within the village, both cases being frequent in the northern part of Mossi territory, and secondly the isolated blacksmiths, such as those of Ouagadougou for example.

325 326 The blacksmiths who live in separate villages or quarters smelt the iron ore in large furnaces in the bush. They do this once a year, during the dry season, and the process takes one month.

The whole blacksmith village sets down to the task and builds a certain number of blast furnaces, at the ratio of one for every two blacksmiths.

The furnaces are built of red earth near the hills that contain iron ore, and it takes five days to build one of them. Once this is done each blacksmith pair takes over a furnace and uses it. The smiths do not use it together, incidentally, but each one in turn.

Our blacksmiths break up the soil with a soumbéré or taré. They break up pieces of ore and pile them near the furnace. They spread out a layer of dry wood at the bottom of the furnace, then a layer of ore, then another layer of wood, another layer of ore, etc., up to the top. Then the fire is lit.

The fire is stirred with bellows and kept up for three days. At the end of this period of time, the doors made at the bottom of the blast furnace are opened. The iron escapes through these special openings, which are distinct from the permanently open doors through which the slag runs out. On the fourth day the iron has cooled off, and it is removed from the little pits into which it has flowed. It is broken with an iron mallet and returned to the furnace.

The total labor lasts one month. Every evening our blacksmiths return to the village. Some of them produce ten loads of iron /513/ (about 300 kilograms), others only two or three (60 or 90 kilograms).

326 135 423 As for isolated blacksmiths, they do not smelt iron. They buy it from the blacksmiths of the Yatenga (Ouahigouya circle) who are great iron smelters and who own small, famed ferruginous hills around Ouahigouya.

596 428 significance vis-à-vis family property in this second Mossi family type. /547/ Thus, my informant stresses that here family property still has greater significance than private property, but at the same time he adds that in every inheritance he witnessed, the soukala always went to the oldest son, no matter what its origin. He corroborates this with information about his own family, as follows:

He lives, he says, with five wives, two daughters, two unmarried cousins who are the sons of one of his father's brothers, an unmarried cousin who is the son of one of his father's sisters, a nephew who is the son of his own sister, in short, twelve persons including him.

The soukala where he lives once belonged to his father and was built by the latter alone. He has thus inherited it, even though his father had a younger brother.

Incidentally, the brother got nothing, since my informant's father left nothing beside the soukala, no family property or private worth much.

To whom will the soukala go when he dies? Since he has no son, he replies, it will go to his younger brother (he has a younger brother who lives in a separate soukala). Supposing he had a son, however? Then it would go to his son.

I counter that it should go to his brother, since he did not build it himself but inherited it from his father (that is, from his own and his brother's common father), in accordance with the rule he mentioned earlier. He nevertheless holds, however, that it is not so, that younger brothers never did inherit a soukala, I cannot make him alter his position.

596 423 178 This gives us a living example of how the Mossi family has changed. In the old days, family property went along with the family headship to the younger brother. The soukala, for example, figured in almost every case among the family property, either because the family had given it ready made to the young man, or simply because the family had helped him build it. A soukala was private property only when the young man had built it altogether by himself (a very unusual case). Later, the soukala came to be considered private property when it had been built by the young man

596 with the help of his father and family head (which is by far the
423 most frequent occurrence), /548/ while in such a case it had for-
178 merly been considered family property. Finally, the soukala came to be regarded in every case as personal property and to be transmitted for that reason to the oldest son. This, incidentally, is the same evolution that applied to property in general, as we shall see shortly.

593 Now, here is the third and last variant of the prevailing Mossi family type. Nowadays, this variant is by far the most widespread.

1. Every household lives separately, works separately, and procures its own food and subsistence. The help of neighbors is enlisted to clear the fields.

584 2. Every household gives its own children in marriage. The
587 family head no longer does so.
593 As soon as a man has a son, he chooses a little girl who will go to the boy when he reaches puberty. He visits the girl's relatives from time to time and offers them gifts.

584 When the girl is old enough to be married, he takes 50,000
583 cowries (if he is wealthy), skirt cloths, salt, kola nuts, and gives it
593 all to the relatives. Then, the old women in the daughter's family lead her to the home of the betrothed man's relatives. The father kills a sheep, makes a lot of couscous, buys dolo to celebrate her arrival. Then he offers the girl six or seven baskets containing respectively 1,000, 2,000, 3,000, 4,000, 5,000, 6,000, and 7,000 cowries. The young man himself gives his betrothed four or five skirts. If he is very wealthy, he gives her one or two little girls as slaves.

585 On the evening when the wedding is celebrated, the father asks
426 one of his neighbors to lend him a hut, and the young married pair are sent there all alone (they will remain there as long as their soukala is not built). On the morrow, the feasting begins. People dance and feast for seven days at the gates of the father's soukala, at least when the girl is a virgin. If she is not, the feasting is curtailed but nevertheless lasts for another three days.

583 When the father is poor, he offers a few kola nuts to the girl's
591 /549/ father (six or ten). He gives the father and mother some firewood he gathered in the bush, straw to make sɛ́ko /Tr.: mats/ for door, 2,000 cowries, a skirt cloth. He kills a sheep to make

566 gone into Mossi hands. The bagaré did not till the soil. They simply minded their master's herds. As for other work, they also built the straw huts where the Moro Naba of Yatenga, the Riziam Naba, and other chiefs slept at the New Year (we shall see under "Religion" /not translated/ to what purpose).

The bagaré saw to their own support (food and clothing). The multiplying herd belonged to the naba, but its yield (milk and butter) went to the bagaré. Out of this yield, however, they gave the naba whatever he needed of milk and butter.

567 In short, we can see that among the Mossi and Foulsé there exist, or rather existed, the two kinds of slaves known throughout the /French/ Sudan, the trade slaves and the house slaves, the former being salable and the latter a part of the family. Nowadays, as a result of the prohibition against their purchase and sale, there remains but a dwindling number of house slaves.

421 Now we come to family property and its transmission.

596 Family property, properly so-called. —There is no family property among our Mossi, since no work is done in common by the whole family. The family property is limited to family charms owned by the houdoukasaman.

423 Property of the compound, or subfamily property. —This does not
592 exist either, for the same reason, except for the compound itself which is the communal property of the zaka group. While each household has huts of its own, these huts are a usufructuary possession which is in accordance with the full ownership of the zaka group. Now, if some household chief wishes to build a new hut, he notifies the zakasoba, who, incidentally, always grants permission. Once the hut is built, the builder may destroy it if he wishes, which goes to prove that he has full ownership over it, having made it. He cannot, however, destroy the hut where he lives which he did not build as it actually belongs to the zaka. In short, there may be in the compound a mixture of communal property (belonging to the zaka) and individual property (hut built by a household or by an individual, millet granary erected in the same circumstances, etc.), but the communal property prevails by far.

423 Property of the work group. —Here, communal property is impor-
571 tant. /268/ It is from the group fields that the group derives most of its sustenance (seven months out of twelve). The work implements

423 also belong to the group, as we shall see later. The group, however,
571 owns neither slaves nor livestock.

421 Household property. —As we know, during the rainy or cultivating
571 season, the husband works two days out of three for his work group.
592 The third day is his. On that day he works in his small field, helped by his wife or wives. During the dry season, the husband does not work for the group but for himself alone, except for repair work on the compound huts.

571 The household is provided with food by the work group seven months
592 out of twelve and is fed with the produce of its own field for five months.

592 The primary possession of the household, therefore, is its private
423 field.

The field belonging to the household of the head of the work group is marked by a special characteristic. Since the head of the group is busy at all times with the communal field, even on the third day, his small plot is cultivated exclusively by his wives (and by his slaves, if he has any). Hence, his food is procured by his wives five months out of twelve. This only applies, however, to the heads of work groups (as well as zaka and family heads who are necessarily heads of work groups also).

423 Individual property. —Mossi women have tiny cultivated patches
562 which are wholly theirs, which do not belong to the work group or to
422 the household and which they work after five o'clock in the evening whenever possible. This is private property. Clothing, women's jewelry, etc., are also individually owned.

The husband and children also own private property. Actually,
423 the better to distinguish between individual and communal property (whether belonging to the household, the work group, the compound, or the family), we shall review below each type of property in turn.

Fields. —The fields belong primarily to the work group. (They belong only exceptionally to the compound, when it is so small that there is only one work group.) In addition to the fields of the work group, there is the household field. Finally, beside the household field, there are the private plots, for example, the little patches of the women and young men.

Work implements. —These tools (daba, axes, etc.) belong to the
422 work group. To work their small fields (both household and private),
571 men and women use the daba of their work group, but if they damage

422 591 them, they must repair them at their own expense. Those implements which are worn out are replaced by the head of the work group.

422 231 Domestic animals. —Chickens, goats, sheep, donkeys, etc., are all fully owned on an individual basis and not by the group or even by the household. The animal is owned by the man or woman who bought /269/ it. Nevertheless, all the goats and sheep in a compound are gathered together, they sleep in the same place, and they are led to the bush in a flock by the little boys of the compound. The animals of the total family or of the village, on the other hand, are never gathered together.

562 Wives. —I need not emphasize that wives are obviously private property. There are no wives owned in common by the village, the family, the compound, or the work group. The wife, however, is in some measure considered to belong to the compound or even to the family in the sense that a man's wives always go to his brother when he dies.

423 592 The compound. —We saw earlier what applies here. The compound belongs to the zakasoba, but only as a representative of the zaka, as a manager of the property of this subfamilial group. It does not belong to him as private property, in the Roman sense of jus utendi et abutendi /right of use and abuse/. It belongs, ultimately, to the zaka itself.

If this is so, it is not less true that those habitable portions of the zaka, the cabins or huts, are definitely allocated to specific households which have rights of usufruct over them. Thus, the ownership belongs to the zaka, as represented by its head. The usufruct belongs to the households or individuals.

Finally, we may note, as we did earlier, that a hut built exclusively by a household with its own labor or by a single individual of the zaka may be torn down and destroyed by him since it is household or private property set up on subfamilial property. This case, however, is quite exceptional.

The large cabins or huts for millet belong to the cultivating groups. There are also huts for millet belonging to the household, where the husband stores the harvest from the household field. Finally, the 423 large earthen vases, the jars which stand in the huts, lead us from the compound to the subject of furniture. These jars are made by the women and belong individually to specific women.

Furniture. —The furniture, which we shall study in greater detail under "Mode of Subsistence" /not translated/, is very scanty and crude. It is owned privately.

10:Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1964 FA28 Mossi FA28
Yatenga

indirectly from the good will of his ancestral spirits whose benevolence Ego often invokes.

Ambivalence follows from other characteristics of the relationship. Resentment of Ego's depredations of her husband's property and jealous concern for the inheritance rights of her own children appear to be at least partially balanced by a share of the affection her husband shows for Ego. However, joking in this relationship is asymmetrical. The mother's brother's wife takes the more aggressive role, and from the vehemence of her joking, and the structural nature of the relationship, it appears likely that amity lies less heavily in the balance than hostility. The groups to which the two parties belong are equal in status. Their respective positions within them, of course, are not, and this is reflected in the aforementioned asymmetry. Each party is obviously independent of the authority system of the other.

Joking Between Siblings-in-Law

Siblings-in-law who joke are separated by the rule of sib exogamy observed among the Mossi. Reciprocity is basic to the marriage contract that unites their respective kin groups. Several factors tend to create ambivalence in the relationship. Both kin groups—in particular, the extended families of the two marriage partners—profit from the reciprocal tie established between them, but possible failure on the part of either group to reciprocate adequately, particularly with regard to marriage payments, constitutes a persistent source of potential friction. Moreover, the Mossi observe the levirate. Joking between siblings-in-law who are potential spouses, yet are presently constrained by a prohibition against adultery, has frequently been ascribed the function of reducing tension in a situation of conflict. The kin groups of siblings-in-law are always structurally equivalent because groups occupying significantly different strata in Mossi society do not intermarry. As members of autonomous descent groups the participants are obviously independent of one another.

Joking Between Sibs

Sibs (or lineages) whose members joke with one another are, of course, also separate groups.[2] They are always united by a strong tradition of reciprocal social and economic aid. Ambivalence apparently stems from the conflict between this tradition of reciprocity and actual competing claims to land. The origin of joking relationships between two descent groups is often ascribed to the alleged fact that, when they first arrived in the village, leaders of both falsely claimed to the chief that he and his kinsmen had arrived first, and thus had a prior right to land, and that the members of the other group were their slaves. Despite their jocular allegations, both groups are in fact structurally equal and independent.

Joking Between Age-Sets

Joking between age-sets within an age-grade varies with the generational

11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
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also lost much of their interest in preserving their genealogies. Their local lineage segment, which controlled the village nam, still showed interest in its genealogy, but the people of Godin did not quite remember how they were related to the ruling lineage segment. Several times in the recent history of Barkago (and other villages), the men who were given the village nam had to be recalled from distant villages where they were living with maternal patrilineages. So relatively unimportant was possession of the village nam without concomitant noble status that after Naba Ngado took over, the local Biligo people began to ignore all local genealogical records except descent from Biligo. The Ninisi people had the least reason to be interested in their genealogy, and they simply ignored it. They had been separated from the other Ninisi groups in the district for so long that they did not even forbid marriage into those groups.

In villages such as Barkago, the existence of several lineage groupings and families of strangers facilitated local marriages. But in villages with fewer lineage groups, the time came when all groups were so closely linked by marriage and affinal alliances that for all practical purposes the village became an exogamous unit. By 1956, this process had reached such an advanced stage in Barkago that hardly any marriages took place between the Ninisi and Biligo local lineage segments. Both groups were permitted to marry the local descendants of Ngado, because the latter were more recent arrivals in the village. These marriages were of great significance to all villagers because they linked the nobles and the commoners in a series of exchanges. Moreover, because the groups were linked through sisters' sons with special privileges in both groups, problems deriving from status differences were more easily solved. Even the most arrogant noble was often constrained by ancestral sanctions to maintain amicable relations with his in-laws.

The Biligo lineage of Barkago contracted marriages with the other, nonrelated groups within and without the district. The Ngado people did likewise. Whether these nobles were able to marry noble women of other districts is a moot point. Owing to distance and politics, no such marriages are known to have occurred, and no one seems to know whether they were permissible. The Ninisi, who had always been commoners, had the largest marriage circle of all the village groups. They were able to marry nobles, commoners, and the Ninisi of the district and other districts.

The inhabitants of a Mossi village built their houses and cultivated their crops on land the village chief had granted to their respective lineages. Since the royal lineage, by right of conquest, controlled all of Mossi country, the rights of usufruct of a lineage depended ultimately on the Mogho

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Naba. This did not mean, however, that either the Mogho Naba or any of his chiefs owned the land of Mossi country. The Mossi chiefs and their ruling lineage controlled the Mossi people and thus were able to decide who should use the land. However, there is no evidence that Mossi chiefs ever thought of controlling people by controlling land. The land appears to have been a public good, the utilization of which was in the rulers' interests. Rulers tried to attract more people, but they hardly ever tried to get more land. The people within a Mossi community who might have been said to "own" the land were the Ninisi, whose rights were derived from first occupancy and from their special association with the soil in which their ancestors were buried. When they were conquered, they did not lose their "ritual" rights over the land of their communities, but they were persuaded or forced to "care for" them in the name of the ruling group.

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VII

THE ECONOMIC FOUNDATION

THE REVENUE for the support of the Mossi chiefs and their governmental system came from many sources in a variety of forms. The Mossi of Ouagadougou held that "the Mogho Naba is master of everything" (*Mogh Nab n so fa*), and when they referred to the control he and his chiefs exercised over their goods and services, they said, "The commoner rears his livestock for the chief," and cited the proverb "The snake gets whatever is in the belly of the frog."

Since the Mossi were, and still are, primarily an agricultural people, the products of the soil were the main source of revenue. The Mossi chiefs did not own the land, but they controlled it and assigned land rights to their subjects. The Mossi believed that land had no value apart from people, and, conversely, that people could not exist without land. As they said, "Land is the mother; it fed the ancestors of this generation; it feeds the present generation and its children; and it provides the final resting place for all men." Therefore, a Mossi chief never hesitated to give anyone permission to use unoccupied land. It was in his interest to do so, because the more subjects he commanded, the greater were his revenue and prestige. An unpopular chief was censured not by a withholding of tribute and presents, but by a mass exodus of his subjects to another area.

Through the administrative hierarchy, the common people contributed to the support of the various levels of government. The Mogho Naba periodically received agricultural produce from all his subjects. Through the village chiefs, the village people sent part of their produce to the district chiefs, who forwarded it to the provincial ministers. They, in turn, delivered it to the central government during a ceremony appropriately called "Soretasgho" ("completion of the road"). This event occurred at the end of the harvest festival, after all the crops had been gathered in.[1]

To open the ceremony, the provincial governors' retainers began to clear the paths leading from the governors' compounds to the palace, for they had

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dreds of persons lived in Ouidin, the ward of the Ouidi Naba. Some of them were related to him; others had been attracted by his wealth and by his ability to obtain wives for his charges. All of them benefited from being attached to him in one way or another, and in return helped him to augment his income.

All the district chiefs sent women to their provincial ministers to be kept as wives (and thus as agricultural workers), or to be given out as pughsiudse. The Kamsaogho Naba received more pughsiudse than the other ministers because he was in charge of the wealthier districts, and also of course distributed more. The Baloum Naba was especially favored in another respect. Each year, he was entitled to call several *seghse* (sing. *seka*; a corvée or convocation) of his former pages and their relatives to help cultivate his fields. The Ouidi Naba's sources of revenue were about the same as the Baloum Naba's. In addition, his position as chief minister enabled him to obtain numerous gifts from persons who visited Ouagadougou. Moreover, the Mogho Naba often gave him horses from the fado of deceased district chiefs. The Larhalle Naba had full ministerial privileges, and a few other means of obtaining revenue. He was allowed, for instance, to keep the animals that had not been sacrificed on the graves of deceased rulers.

The provincial ministers received many goods and services from the district chiefs of their provinces. Whenever one of these ministers sent a messenger to the district, the chief gave the messenger money and livestock for his master. Furthermore, the district chiefs brought presents for their minister when they paid their annual visit to Ouagadougou to render homage to the Mogho Naba. The provincial ministers used their position as confidants and advisers to obtain as many presents as possible from persons who came to Ouagadougou to ask special favors from the Mogho Naba, to participate in judicial proceedings, or to seek the nam. Moreover, they cooperated with each other in these exactions, so that a person seeking a favor from or through one minister was prudently advised to give presents to or to seek the aid of the others.

The district chief played a key role in the procurement of revenue for the central administration, and derived an income for himself in the process. The seignorial rights over the Mossi people delegated by the Mogho Naba to all nam holders were quite obvious on this level. The district chief had rights to all valuable fruit trees, such as locust-bean and shea-butter, that grew within the boundaries of his territory. He instructed the village chiefs to harvest the fruit of these trees and send it to him. The village chiefs even had to send him the wood from the fallen branches of these trees.

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The district chiefs did not often exercise their rights over fruit trees in the weogho, as the wasteland in their districts was called. If a villager went into the weogho and collected fruit or wood from the chief's trees, he surrendered only part of it to the chief. On the other hand, if he received permission from a district chief to farm in the weogho, he was obliged to gather and send to the chief the fruit on any valuable trees. A district chief sometimes granted the rights over certain fruit trees in the inhabited areas to specific families or individuals, for personal reasons or as a reward for services. In such cases, the chief forfeited his rights to these trees, but retained his rights to the others.[18]

District chiefs also controlled all the resources of creeks and pools within their jurisdiction that were not sacred to certain aboriginal families, or which had not been transferred to specific persons. The aboriginal Ninisi families always notified the district chief when they planned to perform their annual fishing rite to the earth deities. He, in turn, sent representatives to the ceremony, and they were given part of the catch as his share. Persons who were granted permission to fish in the chief's water holes gave him a substantial part of their catch, and even those persons who had private control of fishing places regularly did the same.

The district chiefs also had rights to certain parts of animals caught in their territories. This applied especially to animals caught with such traditional weapons as traps, clubs, bows and arrows, and spears. Men who had obtained flint guns and other firearms from the Ashanti or elsewhere and who had bought their own powder were not obliged to give the chief a part of their game, but it was always prudent to do so. According to a long-standing tradition, the tusk and legs of a slain elephant that were not resting on the ground belonged to the chief, and those that lay on the ground belonged to the Tengsoba in whose ritual jurisdiction the animal had been slain. But the district chief's secular power was so much stronger than the Tengsoba's sacred power that he usually took both tusks, leaving the Tengsoba only two legs. The district chief also received other portions of elephants and parts of all the larger animals killed in his territory. And when hunters in the district were successful in the chase, they usually gave him entire small animals.

Every village in a district contributed to the district chief's revenue by performing special services for him. Certain villages were responsible for keeping specific huts in his compound in good condition; others, whose lands bordered on the woods, had to provide firewood for his compound; and yet others furnished grass and other fodder for his horses. Many villages had the task of cultivating special fields and crops for the district chief.

did not derive any revenue from his judicial functions. He could not levy a fine against any malefactor. However, his intermediary position between the villagers and the district chief did permit him to obtain some revenue whenever commodities moved from one level to the other.

The officials who administered the villages for the district chief received part of their revenue from the villages under their charge. These local administrators had no courts or retainers comparable to those at the provincial level. However, they did have a large number of wives who contributed valuable agricultural labor. These administrators were permitted to ask the village chiefs for sosose on their own fields several times during the planting season, but—unlike the district chiefs—they were not permitted to have the villagers cultivate special fields for them. In return for any help received, they had to provide food and drink for the workers.

The administrator received most of his revenue as a by-product of active duty in the villages. When he visited a village or transmitted a message to a village chief, he almost invariably received a sheep, a goat, a chicken, or some millet, from the village chief. He also acquired large quantities of goods during the village interregnum: he received gifts from the chief's heirs during the chief's funeral; he received additional presents when they took the fado to the district chief; he could prolong the interregnum in order to receive as many bribes as possible from contenders for the nam; and he was handsomely rewarded when the candidate he had backed was finally installed in office.

The extended family was the basic socio-economic unit supporting the Mossi political organization. The Yirisoba received land rights in his saka from his Sakakasma, who had obtained his rights from the village chief. An extended family in need of additional land would seek help from its Sakakasma or its Boodkasma. When the family no longer needed this land, it reverted to the lineage. If all the land granted to the lineage was already occupied, the extended family, through its lineage head, asked the village chief for more land. The chief usually granted this request, unless he had no more weogho available. In this case, the needy Yirisoba sometimes tried to borrow land from his non-kin neighbors. Such a step was not undertaken lightly, however. If a man borrowed land from his own lineage members or from the chief, the land rights reverted to its donors without difficulty. However, if he borrowed land from another lineage and either he or his benefactor died without assuring the return of the land, litigation often ensued. In some cases a man would seek land from his lineage brothers in another village, who let him use some of their land with their chief's permission. Some Yirisobadamba even asked their district chief for

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permission to use weogho in the district, and new hamlets arose in this way. A Yirisoba who could not obtain adequate land on which to grow food for his family left the district and sought land elsewhere, especially among his mother's patrilineage. However, village and district chiefs always tried to prevent this because they did not like to lose any of their subjects.

As director of economic activities in the household, the Yirisoba supervised the agricultural labor of his charges. It was he who directed the work of his wives, his sons, and his sons' wives, and supervised the care of the family herd. He provided the cotton, which was carded and spun by the women and woven by the men. It was also his task to ensure adequate clothing for the members of his household; and he sold excess commodities in order to buy salt, kola nuts, bracelets, foreign clothes, and other products imported from the forest and desert zones. In each case, the Yirisoba had to balance judiciously the requirements of his household against his obligations to the community and to the political hierarchy. He had to prevent economic rivalry among his sons, and especially among his sons' wives. He had to make sure that every married member of the household had sufficient time to provide goods and services for his own family, and that foodstuffs were distributed equitably among the wives. Finally, he had to use the resources of the household to build and maintain the nexus of socio-economic relationships that provided wives for the male members of the household, and to meet his obligations to the political hierarchy.

The Yirisoba also had social and economic responsibilities toward the other members of his babissi and boodoo. He furnished labor and goods to needy lineage members and to non-relatives with whom he had marriage arrangements. Since much of this help was given on the basis of ultimate reciprocity, very little loss was involved. However, the relationship between commoner and noble families was quite different. In theory, the nobles had no claims on the property of the commoners; but in practice, they did claim such rights. Furthermore, commoner lineages often gave the nobles many more wives than the nobles returned. This inequality enabled the nobles to receive more goods and services from their marriage partners among the commoners than they gave in return. The nobles thus took advantage of their power as possessors of the nam, but even membership in the royal lineage did not exempt them from supporting the governmental services at all levels. This duty was incumbent upon every Moaga.

The Mossi people could not refuse to support their political organization, but often complained about having to do so. Many Mossi felt that their rulers were greedy and avaricious and received too many gifts. Some Mossi held that if the chiefs were not placated with goods and services,